

Reagan develops fever

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WASHINGTON (AP) — President Reagan developed a fever which hit 102 degrees Friday, a "limited setback" which poses a remote potential for pneumonia, while FBI officials concluded toxic explosive material in the bullet that hit him had not leaked into his body.

The president's chest surgeon discounted the rise in temperature — which later fell to near-normal levels and then rose again — and said Reagan still is likely to be sent home to the White House early next week.

His doctors disclosed in a statement issued at the White House that after the president's temperature rose late in the day, they discovered bronchial plugs — hardened tissue and mucous — and "dormant blood" — blood clots that had been expected to form — and removed them in a "fiberoptic-bronchoscopy."

Under that procedure, tiny light-carrying tubes were inserted through the president's mouth and throat and into his damaged left lung, and other tubes were used to remove the material.

They said Reagan was once again receiving antibiotics he had received following surgery, as a result of Friday's procedure. The antibiotics had been halted for more than 24 hours.

The FBI raised the possibility that a toxic chemical contained in the "devastator" bullet which struck the president may have seeped into his body.

Assistant FBI Director Thomas Kelleher said the White House had been notified of the ballistics finding, which confirmed that the slugs which hit Reagan and three others were explosive rounds which contained lead azide. Kelleher said he preferred to leave it to medical authorities to assess the potential danger of the chemical, but "while it's not healthy material, it's not extremely toxic."

The official said the bullet dug from Reagan's chest — an apparent ricochet which did not explode — had lost about one-eighth of its original weight, raising the possibility that some of the chemical remained in his body. "We cannot tell," Kelleher said.

Dr. Dennis O'Leary, of the George Washington University Hospital staff, said in a telephone interview that while he was "still looking for some information" on the matter, "the lead, as far as I know, is not a problem."

He said that "all the lead in a bullet" would not be "sufficient to create a detectable blood-level of lead" in the president's body.

Asked if the president's fever could be related to the toxic matter, he said, "I'd be very, very doubtful."

Other doctors concurred with Dr. Benjamin Aaron that the president's fever, which dropped to 99 degrees later in the day, was a normal post-operative occurrence. Meanwhile, the president got out of his bed for the second straight day and conferred with two senior Cabinet members about to leave on foreign trips.

The president received Secretary of State Alexander M. Haig Jr. and Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger, who reportedly got embroiled in an argument in the White House situation room within hours after the president was shot.

Aaron said at a midafternoon briefing that the 102-degree fever indicated that part of the president's left lung was not functioning as it should be. He called the development a "limited setback," adding that there is no evidence that infection has set in. Fevers are common after major chest or lung surgery, the physician said.